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CANADIAN POETRY MAGAZINE

VOLUME 18

Nos. 1-3 — Spring — 1955

Published by

THE CANADIAN AUTHORS ASSOCIATION

Foreword

Greetings and good wishes to the new editor, Mr. Leo Cox! Since its beginning almost 30 years ago, his magazine has had a succession of illustrious editors: E. J. Pratt, Watson Kirkconnell, Earle Birney, and Arthur S. Bourinot. I am confident that Leo Cox will maintain the standards of the past editors and will produce a magazine of high quality. The members of the Canadian Authors' Association and its National Executive are grateful to the new editor for assuming the responsibility at considerable personal sacrifice.

Frank Stiling,
President,
Canadian Authors' Association

June, 1955

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Canadian Poetry Magazine

A quarterly magazine, published by the Canadian Authors Association for the encouragement and development of Canadian verse. Annual subscription, $2.00; single copies 50 cents. Verse published in the Magazine will be paid for at the rate of 1 cent a word with a minimum of one dollar. The Magazine shall have first publication rights only; the copyright will remain with the author. Verse published elsewhere will not be accepted for publication. If return of manuscript is desired, a stamped, addressed envelope must be enclosed. **Only Canadian stamps are acceptable. Contributors from U.S.A. and other countries should use International (or Imperial) reply Coupons.** Individual criticism of verse submitted cannot be undertaken. Address, Business Manager, "Canadian Poetry Magazine", 677 Dundas St. West, Toronto, Canada.

Patrons of poetry are reminded that we pay for all poems printed, and are grateful for donations to defray the expense of this policy.

Manuscripts should be mailed to The Editor, Leo Cox, P.O. Box 821, Postal Station "B"—Montreal, P.Q., Canada.

FOUNDATION SUPPORTERS

It is, perhaps, unnecessary to state that a magazine such as this is not a profit making venture: It is published by The Canadian Authors Association for the encouragement of poetry in Canada and its continued appearance is only made possible by the generosity of its Foundation Supporters.

Contributions are needed and would be very welcome.

The Editor and The Management Committee

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The contents of this Quarterly are indexed in The Canadian Index, published by The Canadian Library Association.

CANADIAN
POETRY
MAGAZINE

Spring 1955

VOLUME 18 - - NUMBER 1 - 3
TORONTO, ONT.

EDITOR - - - - - LEO COX
P.O. Box 821, Postal Station B, Montreal, P.Q. Canada
Authorized as Second Class Mail, Post Office Department, Ottawa.

ON STYLE:

"But I will pass on to what has ever seemed, since I found it in one of Jowett's 'Introductions' to Plato, the best definition known to me of good style in literature:—

"The perfection of style is variety in unity, freedom, ease, clearness, the power of saying anything, and of striking any note in the scale of human feelings, *without impropriety!*"

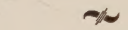
—On the Art of Writing,
by Sir Arthur Quiller-Cough

ON THE POET:

"So there arises in him (i.e. in the modern poet) a conflict; between the old which his heart approves and the new which fructifies his imagination; between the idea of a change of heart that should change society and the idea of a new society making a new man; between individual education and mass economic conditionment."

—'A Hope For Poetry',
by C. Day Lewis.

Editor's Note



In assuming the editorial responsibilities of the Canadian Poetry Magazine, I am very conscious of my task of worthily continuing the good work of its previous editors and of realising the ideals its founders set for it over a quarter of a century ago.

Though the Magazine was established mainly to encourage the writing and reading of poetry in Canada, its pages are open to poets in any country, writing in English. Its contents are evidence of this international interest.

Short poetry in any form will be welcomed, the main considerations being that the verse be original and not previously published; that it be freshly experienced and not imitative; that its beauty be communicated and not be stifled by obscurity.

Suggestions as well as contributions will be welcomed for the editor's consideration. A new editorial committee is in formation. At present, it consists of Dr. V. B. Rhodenizer, Acadia University, Wolfville, N.S., and the Editor,

Leo Cox

MICHELANGELO'S DAVID

Carved from the coursing marble of his might
The white limbs leapt defiant to be free.
We are the block discarded from his sight,
Releasing chisel gives not liberty.
Look, live through this; go, throb in bended arm,
Unconscious act of yet unconquered kings.
Now draw the sling, or strike the harp's alarm,
Unknown, a crown will kneel, to these small strings.

Rest, rest, O hand, upon the thigh's smooth peace,
The brush of living fingers curling there.
Unsullied splendour of eternal lease,
His youth perpetual bursting through the air.
We are but sighs of men, and this the man
We but the stones beneath his mighty span.

Richard A. George
Glen Ridge, N.J.

AT NIGHT

Rises, as the warm spicy smell of loaves,
A stillness more than silence from the groves.
The dim sweet universes of the grass
Pour on the midnight song like molten glass.
No leaf but droops in drowsy listening
And sways upon the dark when the trees sing.
Sounds faintly from afar, past the mind's sight,
A striking clock muffled in miles of night.

Bird Ferguson,
Chicago.

THE INFINITE MOMENT

The infinite moment
scratched its head,
got up,
and wandered off into finity;
and man was made.

It forgot, being rather absent,
to bring along divine substance,
but remembering Thetis
and being pressed for eternity
it continued with man.

It dragged quintessence
from Lethe
causing Baucis and Philemon
and their guests
and a hope for man.

It introduced Ishtar
and bleeding Adonis
and Genesis two,
scratched its head
(this time for new cause)
and wandered back to infinity.

H. Grant Samson,
Kingston, Ont.

TIME'S RIVER

Time glides unhurried through the city's smoke,
A curved path, bordered once by reed and fen,
Where early Celt hollowed a log of oak
And ripples fled from oars of Caesar's men.
Gay wherries lit the quiet river's face,
Hot crimson, scarlet, frosty blue and gold,
To bear young Anne, in stiff brocade and lace,
Seemingly tame but proving wild to hold.
Thunderous salvos beat upon the Tower,
Crowds peered askance at Henry's winsome mate . . .
The water lapped as lightly in the hour
She stooped to enter by the low dark gate.

Rome and her legions vanished ages since,
Queens fell to dust, the silent river flows
A thread of time, past cardinal and prince,
Harlot and saint in communal repose.
By green embankment and by huddled walls,
Where dockside loafers watch the busy Thames
The roofs of Limehouse, pigeons of St. Paul's,
Look down on mankind's latest strategems;
For flying far above the ancient track,
Come noisy jets with shining silver wings,
The ghost of Pepys himself must wander back
To ponder these extraordinary things.

Katherine van der Veer,
Yonkers, N.Y.

AQUARIUM

Hither and yon we go,
Darting in sudden dashes like the fish
In an aquarium who swish
Their tails, then back away
Before they know
Disaster.

We also are bound by glass,
Pass and repass
In petty aimlessness; drift; then hurry fast and
faster,
Our apprehensions and our fears almost our master
As we float through our wide aquarium, the world;
When sudden light
Gleams like the rays of sun
Across the aqueous gloom
To keep us from our doom.

Does God observe us, as we do
The denizens whom we have laid
Among aquatic plants across the living room?
Despite the way we tear,
Impatient, here and there,
Are we still objects of his care?

Norreys Jephson O'Connor,
Santa Barbara, Calif.

VARIATION ON A THEME

Be with me, music, as I make my way
Down the declining slope beneath the gold
Of sunlight at the final hour when day
Slips into darkness and the early evening cold.
Rising like mist, the sound of strings
Floats upward, increasing, as if to serenade
The evening star, which, as it brightens, brings
Twilight and darkness, on all things gently laid.

Fresh instruments take part, until the sound
Becomes a vast crescendo to reassure
My spirit when night at last is all around
Me. Still these tones stay ever clear and pure,
Mingling to form a mighty symphony
To free me, earthbound, for eternity.

Norreys Jephson O'Connor,
Santa Barbara, Calif.

LOVE POEM

I too feel the speed, the rush of it
As it glides with you over the hardened
Iced road descending past moving hills
Which wave with white hands, around corners
Clutching with snowy arms to enclose you
Gliding swiftly down past the trees and
Waiting me; I know your pace.

H. Grant Sampson,
Kingston, Ont.

TO THE MIRA FERRY* CHURCH

Austere and silent as the argent moon,
You lift your head above the fir-clad hills,
And hold communion with infinity.
While at your feet the sky-robed Mira flows
In wind-ploughed furrows, to the waiting bay.
To you the exiles came from Scotian Isles,
And found within your portals hope and strength
To fortify the sinews of the soul,
Against the storms that sweep the little vale
Between the peaks of two eternities.
Despite vicissitudes that give earth pain,
Or all the glamor, all the tinsel show,
Undaunted you await each destined change,
That marks the commonweal or common-woe.
And from your lofty spire each Sabbath morn,
In deep and solemn far-flung peals proclaim
To all the faithful, and the doubting few:
There is a God. His altars shall remain.

James Townshend MacVicar,
Waltham, Mass.

*In Cape Breton, N.S.

MORNING SONG

Now you are nearer than my heart
. . . and yet inexorably far.
Sleeping, you rift my world apart;
I cannot climb to where you are.
Behind those eyelashes, my Love,
lies dormant all your womanhood—
gentle tigress and savage dove,
the witches of each broomstick mood,
pagan and pilgrim, yield their place
to this one child who, like a ghost,
assumes your lovely form and face.
Euridice was not more lost
in darkness when her prince forgot
hell's terms *(I shall invoke you with
my kiss)*. Euridice was not
more loved, and she a minor myth
beside your mystery *(can I
then hold you by my faith?)*. For in
your flesh two separate legends lie,
two spirits share the discipline
that sleep and waking, birth and death
and time and being you impose—
the woman who, with every breath,
adopts the appropriate mask and poise
(yet have I torn the masks aside),
and treads my future as a stair
lightly, politely, in her pride;
or in her passion makes it flare
beyond the planets with her name:
and then the child transcending all
her beauty, arrogance and flame.
So in my morning presence fall
the attributes I deified
leaving the unknown, this shy grave

enigma sleeping at my side.
Desire is stilled beneath the wave
and cannot now be reconciled
with a reverence such as this.
But dream, my Darling, in the child
and I shall call you with a kiss.

Howard Sergeant,
London, England.

MADRONA TREE: OREGON

The madrona raises forked fingers
in skeletal posture to the mist
rising as a late sleeper
across the dark rows of apple trees,
where whirring wings
of hummingbird and gray quail
stir the heaviness of night.
Above the vaulted mountain range,
crested in snow,
a creeping tide of brilliance floods
valleyward, lighting each window
with a splash of gold.

Jane Beverlin Tate,
Washington, D.C.

MORNING PIECE

Morley, Alberta, Canada

Giants
from an ancient upheaval
rise from mountain passes.
Mist, torn bits of tissue,
swirls above the tops of granite cliffs
where dark trees are dwarfed
at this high altitude.
Static green is stippled
by wild daisies nodding
in the wind.
The train is a burnished snake
coiling into low places
where golden buttercups gleam at track-side
and a tumbling jade waterfall
spills beauty from gray rock.

Jane Beverlin Tate,
Washington, D.C.

A POEM IS . . .

A poem is for singing
as a bird is for winging.

A poem is not for the eye or head.
A poet's word
is meant to be heard,
not read.

A poet's rage
dies on the page.

Gustav Davidson,
New York City.

"He desires, if it be but for a moment, to be as the gods are, to be still." Charles Morgan.

I have laid by my weapon of metaphored thought
And seductions of all-fathered faith
As useless to pinion that second of silence
Elusively clear in the midst of our clanging awareness.

I saw sunlight shafted by evergreen columns
Blunting itself on the stubborn softness of fog.
Gleaming past passionless trunks, impartially lighting
The dark face of parasite fungus
And bright creation of leaves,
It leaped sharply from forested cliffs and struck
The uprolling fog face.
Then lost and diffused, it shimmered a vanishing lovely
illusion of light
Through the tortured gray convolutions.

My second of stillness was given unearned
By the delicate meeting of fog's formed edge
With sunlight strayed in the forest.

It blessed me with knowing and peace
Then secretly, shyly withdrew;
For eager to claim it leaped thought with a glittering
phrase
And faith knelt,
Intoning a prayer.

Edna W. Slater,
Cordova Bay, B.C.

QUEEN'S PARK: 8 A.M.

A sudden storm cloud of pigeons
dull blue and sullen gray
settled about the feet
of the derelict on the bench.
Deliberately he broke
bread into bits which he threw
with calculated fairness
as though he were St. Francis
preaching a gospel of crumbs.
Then he folded his coat for a pillow,
put his feet on the bench and slept.
Decently screened by shrubs
the caretakers burned the litter,
that the eyes of hurrying men
might not be reproached and offended
by the waste of yesterday.

Fred Swayze,
Toronto.

SAMPLER

Here where the kittiwakes idle
On the coolest drills and checks,
The sun, sharp as a needle,
Sews ribbons round their necks;

And where the tweedy beaches
Are buttoned up with glass,
In long-armed feather stitches
Marries sand and marram grass.

Howard Sergeant,
London, Eng.

COUSIN TREE

The scaly cedar more than any
Recalls a saline past,
Remembers webbed aquatic things.
But dry now, dry and aromatic are the cones of fir and cedar
And the long tendrils of the hemlock
And shaped red flakes of bark from yellow pine.

Do you remember how, in spring,
You took a balsam twig between your teeth
And bit hard through the fat green flesh
And tasted all day long the bitterness and fragrance on
your tongue?

Our hands are curious for the rough and smooth of trees.

We are denied the easy thought of kinship,
The warmth of mutual good will;
We wish to know what shaping of desire makes us need a
forest near
To touch and taste and smell.

Their boughs wave gaily, we are forced to know
That gaiety is ours, not theirs.
They cannot know that we endow their storm blown frenzies
With an apostolic rapture,
That we contain, unshared
The passion of their heavy summer brooding.

They are not akin.

Unless we trace a common genealogy
Back to that first defiant cell
Demanding hospitality of hostile seas.

Grandsire cell you have a thing to answer for.

Through fetid heat and pain of self-absorption
Branched your offspring man to seek a blissful nothing;
Our cousin tree grows neatly, fragrantly
Through sun and rain and air
And breathes a rich nirvana, unaware.

Edna W. Slater,
Cordova Bay, B.C.

YOU NEVER CAME

We never came together to this place
Of ruined pilings, rocks and lonely beach;
Yet often I have felt that I could reach
And touch your hand toward sundown; interlace
My fingers in the willow shadows here,
And find you waiting: — Yes, we all may dream
A little while before the final gleam
Goes from the sky . . . Your footsteps, year by year
Grow softer; and your face is but a glow
Between the amber branches; and the light
Trembles, dissolves . . . You never came with me
To watch this sombre beauty; yet I know
Some part of you is in the crying flight
Of winter gulls, and shadows on the sea.

Willis Eberman,
Portland, Ore.

PHEASANT IN THE GRAVEYARD

Adalbert we call him, the fiery cock
Pheasant, of whom I'm inordinately fond.
Drowsy, abed in the early hours, beyond
Consciousness, I hear him smite and shock
The universe with feathered thunder, mock
The moon with such a trump it may respond
And echoing seas rise up, flood Trebizond
Or Tantramar or the Gibraltar Rock;

Half-sleeping, see his stealthy silhouette
Stride tenderly among the astonished tombs
Behind the hill, fevered in April sweat.
Surely a stir within their mouldering rooms
Aware of ring-necked, irridescent breath,
Coppery courage, horned disdain of death . . . !

Leo Cox,
Montreal.

LYING AWAKE

Wind cries over cornfields
With the voice of my grandmother
Who was young and urgent
And died still thirsting.
Sprung from the black dirt, cornstalks, the cottonwood tree
Her voice is the January wind.

Nacella Young,
Oswego, Ill.

LANDON'S BAY

These I remember:
Paths of dappled gold,
and bronze-leafed ferns,
and scarlet columbine;
and where a heron stands,
the indigo of quiet waters,
and the limpid shine,
where willows lean
above the river's lip,
while red-winged blackbirds
sway and swallows dip.
sway and swallow dip.

These I remember:
How the waters reach,
caressing lichened rocks,
and murmuring low;
and how the wind's will
drives the breakers high,
under the wild-tinged glow
of racing sky;
and how there trembles on this magic land
the ministrations
of an unseen Hand.

Lillian Gray,
Guelph, Ont.

ON DALI

A distant sea, a telephone,
An empty saddle on desert sand—
The watch that always points to three,
A watch without a minute hand.
The succulent egg, the piercing eye
That focused on the ceiling's sky
Awaits the touch to close the lid,
Suspended upwards when we die.
Whether 'tis softer to receive or give,
To soothe the palate with albumen's silk,
To hold the mouthpiece at the ear
Or feel the sound vibrate upon the tongue—
Arrested moment, three o'clock
That distant sea will ever mock.

Margaret Church,
Lafayette, Ind.

WISH FOR FLIGHT

This bit of tissue, cased in carven bone,
Eroded by the sights and sounds of years,
So soon destroyed, so short a time your own,
Can shrink the ocean to a chain of tears,

The countryside to quilt-blocks, dark and light,
Destroying all the ancient laws of space;
Till, swaying slightly from Icarian flight,
You stoop to touch the bluebell's tiny face.

Nacella Young,
Oswego, Ill.

THE SISTERS

Between the circling parallels of time
Encased within the hollow of a Hand,
Between the rocky foothills that they climb
Obeying each her singular remand,
The line between the nun and courtesan
Is this thin agony of difference wide:
Love fans and flickers, flames and dies again;
The grail is never quite identified.

Both seek a love to fill the emptiness
And scan the galaxy for lost equations
Known in the honesty of a first caress
Plus or minus years and obligations.
But one seeks love where other people are
And one knows *lonely* is to be a star.

M. Kilpatrick,
Brownsville, Tex.

SUDDENLY AT HIS RESIDENCE

Startled by the summons,
He gripped the arms of his chair
With straining fingers.
Gently he settled back
Softly, without a sigh,
And was dead.

So indecisive he had been
That meekly he passed through life
Invisibly.
Death almost forgot him,
But recollecting, beckoned
Casually.

Fred Swayze,
Toronto, Ont.

CHILDHOOD'S HOUR OF TIME

In his childhood's hour of time
He hugged his happy images—
Experience crowded upon him
Washing his sun-narrowed eyes
With bright discovery;
Every petal was a voyage,
Every rock a shape learned,
Wonder lay in layers
Upon thresholds of the mornings.

Where has he gone?
Under which solemn guise
Does he walk with life?
Years in retreat
Have made him wise—
(His songs are captive now and shy)
But his wisdom is a deadly thing
That coffins up the child.
His heart holds requiems
When wind and sky have cancelled,
In a sudden moment,
The ties that bind a man .

Dorothy Dalton,
Menasha, Wis.

THE POET DYING ALONE

Having laid a bitter ash
On the east wind,
Having felt the stem of the blue flag
Snap in my hand,

And watched the scared buck bound
Into the trees;
Having listened all night to the beat
Of the cold seas

On the harsh and windy coast
Of a north land,
I could wish to know your thoughts
At the end.

Were you screaming to north and south
With your last breath,
Or seeking the one right word
To picture death?

Nacella Young,
Oswego, Ill.

BOOK REVIEW

("Many Moods" by E. J. Pratt)

Vitality is rampant in this book
That might be called a true aristocrat
Of verse . . . seventh from the pen of Dr. Pratt.
Old days in Newfoundland, from which he took
These briny tales, march past with grapnel hook,
A sea cathedral . . . dog in scarlet hat . . .
Ships, gulls and gales . . . an aged nurse diplomat,
And every one wears a familiar look.

The ocean's organ music lingers round
This haunting word-mosaic of the years,
And beauty with a benediction leans
So lightly on the lines that joy and tears
Often come together, deftly gowned
In magic by the shifter of the scenes.

Amy Bissett England,
Montreal.

EVERYTHING ON EARTH MUST DIE

Everything on earth must die,
All the lowly, all the high.

All the little children playing,
All the old men bent and graying.

Everything we love must pass,
Broad the room beneath the grass.

All the grandeur and the glory
Are but chapters in a story.

All the trouble and the sorrow
Will be vanquished by the morrow.

All of sin and crime and lust
Will pass away as all things must.

All the poverty and squalor,
Worship of the mighty dollar.

Everything man loves must go
Sleep beneath blue-shadowed snow.

All the beauty, all the passion,
Death will still them in his fashion.

All the loveliness of earth
Is doomed the moment of its birth.

Everything on earth must pass,
Broad the room beneath the grass.

Death's the friend who never falters,
The only one who never alters.

Finality the mortal trend,
Life's beginning is the end.

Men must come and men must go,
Who is there can answer "No."

Everything we love and cherish
Must inevitably perish.

Life progresses to perfection
Death is but a resurrection.

Everything man loves must pass,
Broad the acres of the grass.

Arthur S. Bourinot,
Ottawa, Ont.

Book Reviews

"Canadian Poetry in English": Chosen by Bliss Carman, Lorne Pierce & V. B. Rhodenizer (Canadian Literature Series) Ryerson, 456 pp. — $4.00.

This is a new, revised and enlarged edition of a standard anthology of English Canadian poetry. The work embraces writing of both traditional and modernistic types of writing, and includes verse of many poets new to previous collections of this kind. An effort has been made to show the new vigour which has flowered in recent Canadian poetry; and despite evidences of dependence on English and American writers, the new anthology clearly demonstrates a very well established and lively Canadian poetic tradition.

Bliss Carman would have approved of this extension of his original idea to represent the progress of poetry in Canada. Dr. Pierce's foreword pays tribute to the editorial contribution made by Professor V. B. Rhodenizer, Ph.D. Litt.D., head of the Department of English at Acadia University who assumed the main task of bringing the new edition up to date. A creative writer himself, and author of "A Handbook of Canadian Literature", he has done a fine job for Canadian poetry in this splendid anthology.

—L. C.

Gerard Manley Hopkins. Geoffrey Grigson. *Longmans* for the *British Council,* 2s. 1955. 21.5 cm. 34 pages. Portrait frontispiece. Bibliography. Paper covers. *(Bibliographical Supplements to 'British Book News')*

Mr. Grigson is a naturalist as well as a poet and critic and therefore particularly well qualified to write on Hopkins. This essay is both a stimulating introduction to a major English poet and a valuable contribution to the understanding of his work. The theme is the 'earnest emphatic possession' of nature in all its minutiae which was one of Hopkins's special virtues.

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